

# **Beyond Business/IT Alignment: View from the Top Driving Utility Performance with IT**

**Mark Premo P.E.  
Former General Manager  
Anchorage Water / Wastewater Utility**





## IT is your Friend

- Technology improvements are like other decisions – it's about risk management
- If done right:
  - Sustainable business improvements are created
  - Staff productivity and morale are enhanced
- If not:
  - You become a target for elected officials, boards or regulatory commissions
  - You can lose staff confidence in your leadership



## Cultural Challenges

- Is your utility ready to “embrace” change?
- Bottom line: the utility, top to bottom, must be ready to change business as usual, through the use of technology
- Staff needs to see the value in using technology for the betterment of their work environment
  - Staff must embrace change – not because they are told they must do it, but because they understand the need to
  - If your utility is not ready for change – then step back and develop a culture that embraces change as a good thing, not a bad thing

## Do you have the right Chief Information Officer?

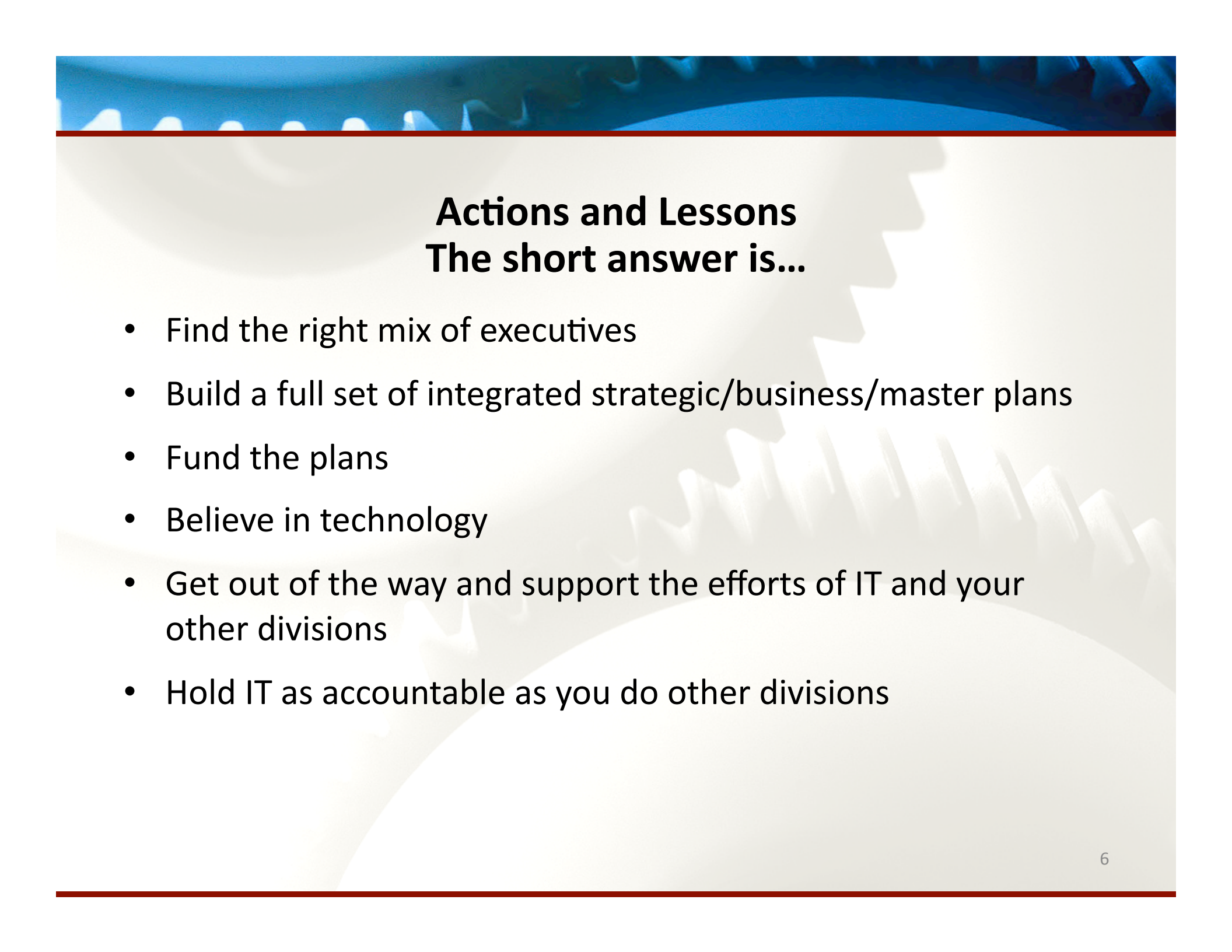
Find the right CIO – consider background, experience, education, adaptability, as well as fit for the organization. The right CIO can:

- Quickly obtain peers “seal of approval”
- Effectively work with your executive team
- Translate “techno-babble” to utility business speak and vice- versa
- Can be taught new styles
  - Your CIO may be the right person. It’s the GM’s responsibility to lead



## Issues

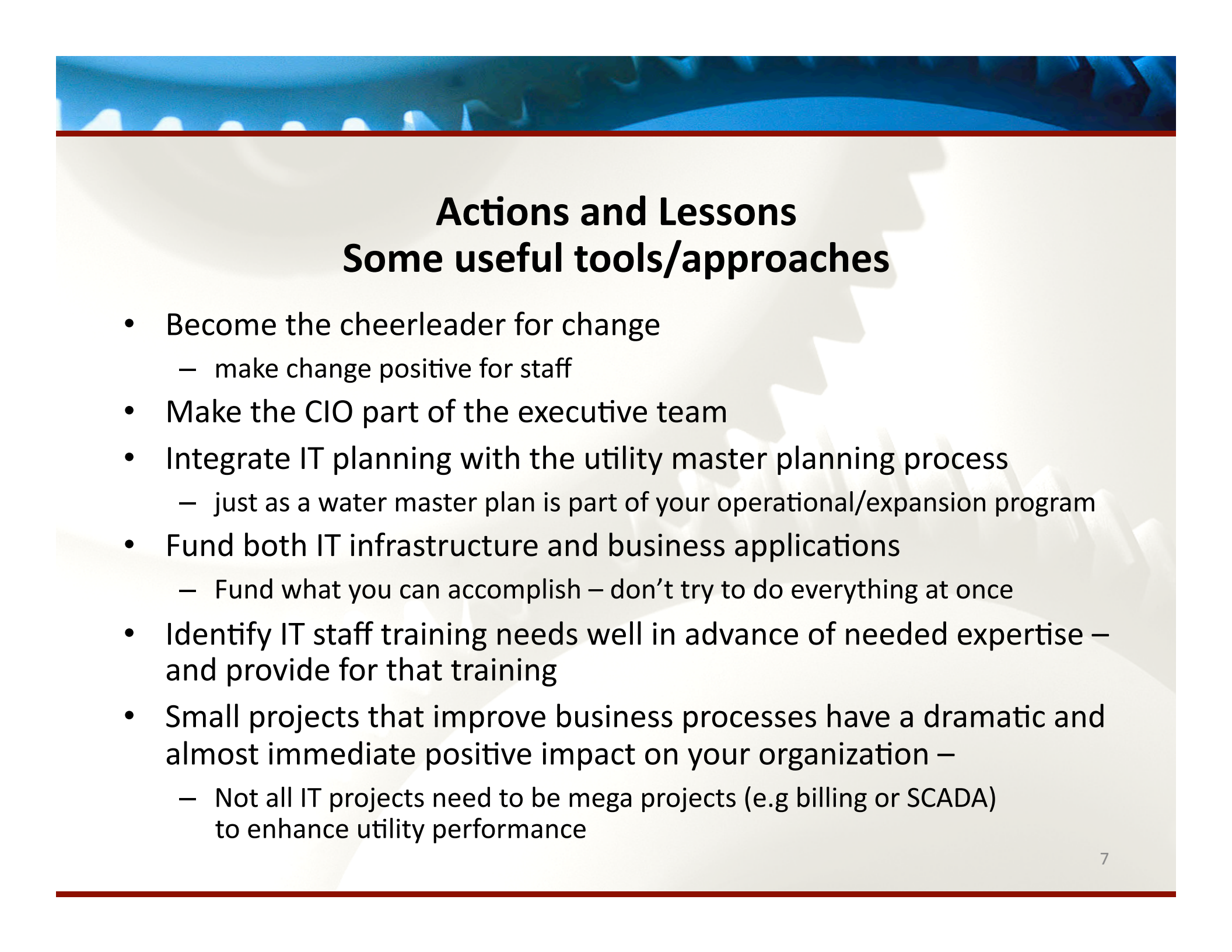
- Funding, Staffing, Training
- Current state of technology at the utility
- What can you effectively control vs. what you are told to do
  - Operational and decision making ability for the GM
  - Relationship between your IT department and others (such as City IT)
- What else is broken in the utility that consumes your time?
- Is there a five-year operational and capital plan for the utility?  
Is there an IT Strategic/Master Plan? Are they integrated?



## **Actions and Lessons**

### **The short answer is...**

- Find the right mix of executives
- Build a full set of integrated strategic/business/master plans
- Fund the plans
- Believe in technology
- Get out of the way and support the efforts of IT and your other divisions
- Hold IT as accountable as you do other divisions



## Actions and Lessons

### Some useful tools/approaches

- Become the cheerleader for change
  - make change positive for staff
- Make the CIO part of the executive team
- Integrate IT planning with the utility master planning process
  - just as a water master plan is part of your operational/expansion program
- Fund both IT infrastructure and business applications
  - Fund what you can accomplish – don't try to do everything at once
- Identify IT staff training needs well in advance of needed expertise – and provide for that training
- Small projects that improve business processes have a dramatic and almost immediate positive impact on your organization –
  - Not all IT projects need to be mega projects (e.g billing or SCADA) to enhance utility performance